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# ARTS

## FAST TRACK

### Parents' TV group slams Everwood, but loves Joan

It's no surprise that the watchdog group called the Parents Television Council picked Joan of Arcadia as best show. But its annual rankings of the best and worst shows on television for families might surprise a few this year by naming as the worst show the family drama Everwood. The rankings are based on incidents of violence, sex (including innuendo) and profanity in a given show. Everwood is paying for its "careless and irresponsible treatment of sexual issues. ... (And because its) reckless messages about sex without consequences are expressly targeted to impressionable teens." The Emmy-nominated Joan, on the other hand, is "one of television's most pro-family shows." It stars Amber Tamblyn as a teen who speaks to God on a regular basis.

### A pox on Slater's latest stage job

EDINBURGH – The show must go on, but not if the star – in this case Christian Slater – has chicken pox. Producers had to cancel the opening night of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, which was due to open in Edinburgh on Friday and run for three weeks in conjunction with the city's annual arts festival. "We so hoped we would be able to make the first performance but poor Christian's chicken pox has simply been too virulent," said producer Nica Burns. Jack Nicholson won an Oscar for his role as McMurphy in the 1975 movie adaptation of Ken Kesey's novel, set in an Oregon mental hospital.

### Schwarzenegger reunites with Leno

There's an "I'll be back" joke in here somewhere: California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger will appear on the Tonight Show on Friday (WPTZ-5, 11:35 p.m.), a year after announcing his candidacy to Jay Leno. The governor's return to Leno's couch isn't exactly a surprise. In fact, he's been on the show twice since August 2003 – once after winning the governorship in the recall election that ousted then-Governor Gray Davis and once in March.

### U.S. Idols line up

CLEVELAND, OHIO – An estimated 15,000 hopefuls began arriving at 6 a.m. yesterday at Cleveland Browns Stadium and planned to sleep out all night for a shot at tryouts this morning for American Idol. Cleveland is the first city in the U.S. to host auditions for the Fox show's fourth season. Auditions were to begin at 8 a.m. today. Producers will decide who in the crowd will report to a second round of tryouts tomorrow. Then executive producers Nigel Lythgoe and Ken Warwick will pick who auditions for judges Randy Jackson, Paula Abdul and Simon Cowell on Aug. 14-15 at a city hotel.

### Anti-Fox News film goes to theatres

NEW YORK – Outfoxed will be in theatres beginning Friday, after weeks of being available only on the Internet at www.outfoxed.com. The documentary, which portrays U.S. cable outlet Fox News Channel as far from its motto of "fair and balanced," opens Friday in New York, Los Angeles, Washington and San Francisco. Then it will expand to other cities in upcoming weeks, distributor Cinema Libre Studios said yesterday. The is no word so far on Canadian distribution. The film is composed of clips compiled during weeks of round-the-clock taping of the network. Director Robert Greenwald is trying to demonstrate what he believes is a pattern of right-wing bias and support for the Republican agenda.

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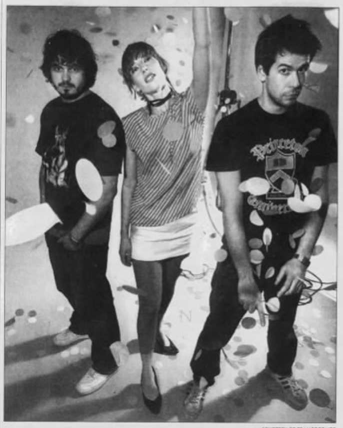
FRANCOFOLIES



COURTESY OF FRANCOFOLIES

The Prototypes performed at a free show Monday night and with Les Breasfeeders last night.

# Vallières wins night's biggest crowd

WEALTH OF CHOICE AT MONDAY FREE SHOWS

Jaojoby had the best groove, while Le Nombre, Elista, Prototypes rocked on

With no paying indoor shows scheduled on a pleasant Monday night at the FrancoFolies, it was prime time to stroll through a wide variety of free music.

The biggest crowd went to **Vincent Vallières** at the main Ford Focus stage, and he made the most of his opportunity with a rousing performance that echoed Tom Cruise's air-guitar lip-sync act in Risky Business. The boy next door, he's even got Cruise's early baby-faced looks, and a pleasant, leathery Bryan Adams-like voice to go along with the slick country-rock sound.

We kept bumping into singer-songwriter **Dumas**, which isn't hard because he's everywhere on the local music scene anyway – a very personable young chap in cargo shorts and athletic jersey, curious musically, enjoying his growing success. André Menard, music director of the Montreal International Jazz Festival, enjoyed **Prototypes** Monday night but reserved his highest praise for the "true artistry" of **Alain Bashung** over the weekend: "I get goose bumps talking about it and thinking about it."

There was a night-and-day difference in ambiance in Monday's late shows going from La Zone Bleue, where **Le Nombre** held forth, to Le Monde Franco Fou Le Lait, where French college-rock quartet **Elista** tried to attract spill-off from the Vallières crowd. Not a single cigarette smoker could be spotted among the few hundred folks gathered to see this well-scrubbed band. Elista, served up earnest pablum ("Hehhhh, salut soleil," repeated ad nauseam). (Their studious alt-rock clichés probably sounded better at the Spectrum last night, as they do on disc.) In contrast, the city's finest reprobates turned out alongside a remarkably wide array of age groups for Le Nombre, local hard-rock (punk-metal) royalty just back from a tour of France, who performed like they were shot out of a cannon. Very young children and infants are fascinated by all kinds of music, and it was great to see them astride parents' shoulders up near the speakers.

**Jaojoby**, playing in the Madagascar rhythmic style of *salegy*, had by far the best groove of the night (at Le Monde Multiculturel), so light and nimble that you had to concentrate to appreciate how complex it was (and that was a marvel to behold). This 10-member group gushing spring-tight rhythms was led by family patriarch Eusèbe Jaojoby (raw, searing vocals contrasting with his elegantly verbose intros) and includes two dazzling dancing daughters, their demure mom, and an amazing teenage son guitarist (who played one solo behind his head). Their latest album is Malagasy (World Village).

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

"C'est super-beau cette lumière-là," Isabelle Le Doussal, singer of France's art-punk **Prototypes**, said of the dusk at La Zone Bleue on Monday night. Her long legs accented by beach shorts in shower-curtain design, high heels and loose black top, she also said many gentle mercis in a high-class Parisian accent. She generally went against abandoned punk convention in performance, her refined, loose-limbed moves like a kind of cool action painting, and fine off-hand vocalese. "Danse sur la merde, qui passe à la radio," she urged matter-of-factly, which was ironic because Prototypes' recent album, Tout le monde cherche quelque chose à faire (Boxson/Universal), doesn't come close to capturing their raw (and crafty) energy so evident live, sounding cold and too compromised for, um, radio. The band played at last night's punk-garage extravaganza at Metropolis with Les Wampas and Les Breastfeeders, and will be back for an ambitious North American tour in October.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

## Today at the festival

**Les Petites Tounes,** 3 p.m. at Chapiteau Le Lait. Free.
**Folies Foraines,** 4 p.m., Le Monde Forain Loto-Québec. Free.
**Fred,** 5 p.m., Le Monde FrancoFou Le Lait. Free.
**Finalists of the Chantez Haut et Ford casting,** 6 p.m., Ford Focus stage. Free.
**Folies Foraines,** 7 p.m., Le Monde Forain Loto-Québec. Free.
**Catherine Major,** 7 p.m., Le Monde Trad Desjardins. Free.
**Marie Philippe,** 7 p.m., Cruise concert onboard the Cavalier Maxim. Boarding begins at 6. Tickets: $52.90
**M,** 7 p.m., Spectrum. Sold out.
**Dan Bigras Solo,** 7:30 p.m., Cabaret Music-Hall. Tickets: $25.50.
**Marie-Chantal et ses chums de gars,** 8 p.m., Salle Wilfrid Pelletier. Tickets: $25.50 to $42.50.
**La Grande Sophie,** 8 p.m., Zone Bleue. Free.
**Charles Dubé,** 8 p.m., Le Monde FrancoFou Le Lait. Free.
**Syncop,** 8 p.m., Le Monde Multiculturel. Free.
**Anne Sylvestre, first part : Manon Lévesque,** 8:30 p.m., Club Soda. Tickets: $39.50.
**Dany Bédar,** 9 p.m., Ford Focus stage. Free.
**La Bande FeuFollet,** 9 p.m., Le Monde Trad Desjardins. Free.
**Prodygs,** 9 p.m., Le Monde Hip-hop Solo. Free.
**Jeanne Cherhal,** 10 p.m., Monument-National. Tickets: $14.50.
**?Alice!,** 10 p.m., Zone Bleue. Free.
**Charles Dubé,** 10 p.m., Le Monde FrancoFou Le Lait. Free.
**Syncop,** 10 p.m., Le Monde Multiculturel. Free.
**Les Ogres de Barback and Tomás Jensen,** 11 p.m., Spectrum. Tickets: $9.50.
**Dany Bédar,** 11 p.m., Ford Focus stage. Free.
**Prototypes DJ Set,** midnight, Le Shag Savoy du Métropolis. Free.

FrancoFolies runs through Sunday. For details, go to www.francofolies.com or call (514) 876-8989 or toll-free 1-(888)-444-9114.

# That's M, as in masterful

REVIEW | AUDIENCE, AUDIOPHILE APPEAL

Once sound kinks worked out, one of best-sounding shows Spectrum has hosted

JORDAN ZIVITZ
THE GAZETTE

For an alien being, M sure is down to Earth.

The uni-lettered French rocker's FrancoFolies show at the Spectrum yesterday – the first of three sold-out nights – was a bizarre potpourri of avant-garde theatrics, cartoonish absurdity and populist charm. Flitting from 1970s glam to flighty chanson to rave soundtracks, M (born Mathieu Chédid) was never consistent, but always a delight.

The inflatable pink-guitar backdrop provided a portal for band members, and served as a reminder M headlines arenas on his home turf. He vamped in silhouette to the Stonesy riff of Mon ego before entering in all his cartoonish glory, looking like the spawn of a three-way union between Dracula, a vampire bat and Kiss.

M put his much-discussed visual flair in the service of goofy kicks rather than coolness. During one early solo, he fell on his back and kicked up his heels – perhaps the last move fellow image-conscious chameleon David Bowie would be caught doing.

Once some early kinks were ironed out of the system, this was one of the best-sounding performances the Spectrum – or any Montreal venue – has seen. But more than an audiophile's delight, M was an audience's delight. A handful of fans were picked from the crowd for a dance lesson, before getting the chance to waltz to À tes souhaits. Later, a blues band was formed on the spot when two audience members were selected to jam with the musicians. So much for the distant artifice of theatrically minded singers.

On his latest album, Qui de nous deux, M makes Tiny Tim sound like Meat Loaf and can be excruciatingly fey in extended doses. On stage, he had the good sense to beef up his vocal presence by fortifying the set with a batch of older, more dynamic numbers and by pushing his wisp of a voice to its limit. He was as much fire as he was air, and when the feather-light C'est pas ta faute drifted by, it was all the more attractive for being surrounded by more robust material on all sides.

The theatrics came out with a hot-and-heavy electronica segment – to which band members vogued and body-surfed – as well as the giant dancing guitars that bopped in time to Qui de nous deux's title track. Just two incongruous elements in an evening full of them. By the time M encored with a manic rendition of Belleville rendezvous from the film Les Triplettes de Belleville, he had triumphed with a recipe that, on paper, looked like the most horrendously paced concert in recent memory. Through the performer's endless reserve of martian charisma and the thrill of seeing an arena-scale production packed into a club, this might go down as *the* show to have been at once the 16th edition of Les FrancoFolies calls it a day.

M performs again tonight and tomorrow at the Spectrum. Both shows are sold out.

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JOHN MAHONEY THE GAZETTE

French rocker M in concert at the Spectrum last night.

# Bigras | Musician now concentrating on film

CONTINUED FROM D1

Bigras has concentrated on acting and filmmaking in recent years, and says a new album will have to wait until he's finished directing La Rage de l'ange, a love story that follows its protagonists' lives from young children to street kids. It's a project that's particularly close to Bigras, who spent some of his teenage years on the streets of Quebec City and stages an annual benefit for the homeless shelter Refuge des jeunes de Montréal.

"Somebody at (funding agency) Telefilm Canada asked, 'How long have you been writing that?' I said about four years. She said, 'No, I think you mean 46.' Damn right."

Bigras's social conscience extends beyond helping at-risk teens. He had a good excuse for being unavailable for an interview before the start of his residency, as he was entertaining Canadian Forces deployed in Bosnia. He returned to Montreal only one day before the FrancoFolies engagement began; on opening night, he recited a poem inspired by what amounted to a tour of duty for Bigras.

"I had to go and see what war was, because I talk about war a lot and I knew I didn't really know what I was talking about. I saw and heard too much; it was beyond my limits. And I was just there as a tourist.

"I saw a cemetery in Sarajevo, and from very far there was a lot of white. I didn't know what it was, so I zoomed in with my camera and realized it was all little crosses. They were too close – something didn't make sense. I asked a soldier; he said, 'They didn't have room to bury everybody, so they're all buried standing up.' I have 500 stories like that.

"I'm a changed man now. All I can do is write about it or talk about it. ... I take very dark things and try to turn them, if I can, into beautiful things. I just know it's going to come back in one of my movies or my songs."

**Dan Bigras** continues his residency tonight through Friday at 7:30 at Cabaret, 2111 St. Laurent Blvd. Tickets cost $25.50. Call (514) 908-9090.

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